

# The Autumn Academy

## American Painting and The Cult of Craftsmanship

By Royal Cortissoz

A picture is sometimes accepted at the Academy and then not hung for lack of space. This year the hanging committee has made space. That is to say, it has disregarded the policy of recent years, which has kept the ensembles first in view, and has simply put the pictures up, hoisting the sky line higher than we remember having seen it for a decade. The walls at the Fine Arts Building haven't for a long time been so generously covered. In

### The Sun Room



(From the painting by Childo Hassam, at the Autumn Academy.)

the sun, this reversion to an old policy may be open to criticism. It is a warm and rich. It is a virtue in itself. Some hardened contributor may feel because his picture isn't sufficiently isolated, but possibly this matter isn't as important as he thinks it is. It is, after all, worth while to give the rank and file chance to illustrate the general level of American painting. A good many of our salient figures reap the benefit of the one-man show. They can afford to accept an exhibition packed as this one is, out of consideration for the numerous types who have little other opportunity to show what they are doing.

### Good Manners

#### Their Value in the Art of Picture Making

They are doing, among other things, their duty. It is a solid comfort at the present time. The slogan just now is "individuality," that Mesopotamian jewel. Above all things the artist must "express himself." It doesn't matter if his cosmos contains nothing noticeably expressible. He must nevertheless put his little ego on canvas, and in the process he need take no account of his pastors and masters. That he has never learned how to paint is a negligible detail. He may lead to his heart's content if only he will keep his "individuality" to the front. The autumn Academy denotes another mood. The painters who make a mind their manners and hence produce recognizable works of art. It is more or less fashionable to patronize them because they do not patronize the thrilling works of art. This is absurd. The thrilling work of art is extremely difficult to come at anywhere in the world to-day. Europe is no richer than we are in painters of genius.

Short of genius, what is it that lifts a painting out of the ruck? It is the very quality that the modernists rave about, individuality. Only it is authentic individuality, not silly impotent vanity, and it is broad enough, liberal enough, to submit itself to the discipline of study. The good paintings at the Academy are not howling masterpieces, but they give pleasure because they represent personal force, and sincerity, and self-respecting technique. Take, for example, Mr. Leon Krull's "Sleep," to which the Altman prize of \$1,000 has been awarded. It is not precisely beautiful. In fact, we are a little puzzled at a theme of the kind, the recurrent figures, the greenery all about, the ocean view, did not stir one artist to a more realistic emotional pitch. But he has got reality into his canvas, sound drawing, a decent handling of paint, and through it all a faint suggestion of a point of view not altogether conventional. It is one more creditable variation on the familiar note of honest workmanship.

Now welcome it is! The Academy has its disappointments, but it is, on the whole, very cheering in its artistic manners. These mean nothing more than honesty, intelligence, the ability to paint. The significant thing about the bulk of these pictures is not, we repeat, that they are masterly, but that they are painted adequately, respectably. And every once in so often there is a perceptible lift in the aver-

age, somebody paints well and throws in a tincture of personality. Mr. Krull is one of these mild benefactors. Miss Helen Turner is another. Look at "The Room," in which she envelops figure and background in beauty of tone, a new, individualized kind of beauty. It is a refreshing thing. So is Mr. Clifford Adams' portrait of himself (No. 238), and so are two little landscapes that detach themselves from their surroundings, "The Barn Yard Snow," by Mr. Rolston Keeler, and the "Winter

where that little flipp of individuality is concerned. We are free to admit that the autumn Academy is not lavish of this precious gift. Nevertheless, it is there. We have signaled a few specimens and there are more. There is the big "Tree Tapestry," by Mr. Carl Kraft, one of the most engaging landscapes in the show; there is the spirited brushwork in "The Sunny Window," by Miss Esperanza Gabay; there is the robustly painted "Nino" of Mr. Armin Hansen. Nobody exactly "makes a hole in the wall." There are no sensations in this Academy. But there is a lot of work well done.

It is due to the cult of craftsmanship, our characteristic desire to achieve a reasonable technique. There goes with it the conception of a work of art as something truthful and pleasing. There are any number of agreeable pictures on these walls. If there are none that take us by storm we are not surprised or distressed. As we have said before, that kind of picture is extraordinarily rare anywhere. This is a transitional epoch. Art, like some other things, could do with more leadership. Meanwhile fidelity to fundamental ideals is immensely reassuring, and there the autumn Academy is cheerfully representative of American painting. Things are evidently better here than they are in Paris. A friend just returned from that city describes the autumn Salon as given over utterly to the Bolsheviks. "There isn't a thing in it that isn't popped." The sterling old French sense of form seems to have been momentarily obliterated. We mention the situation for the behoof of those discontented souls who cannot endure our Academy, but rest on the conviction that "they order these things better in France." As a matter of fact "they" do nothing of the kind.

### Prud'hon

#### How He Enriched the Classical Tradition

The Prud'hon exhibition at the Wildenstein gallery is an ideal one of its kind. It is small, and it is shown in a small, well appointed room. It has just the intimate atmosphere which is best suited to the genius of this artist. Though he lived in an era that thought a good deal of the grand style, he was himself not so much for grandeur as for charm. That is Prud'hon's special gift, the envelopment of his themes in a gracious, subtly endearing air. Touch was everything with him. He was musical, lyrical, the master of an essentially tender and fragile quality. In this little collection of about a dozen pieces he is seen actually at full length, in portraiture, in the treatment of the nude and in the role of draftsman pure and simple. Whatever he does is eloquent of the same romantic loveliness, the same charm.

Fully to appreciate Prud'hon you must have some sense of his background. You must see him in that period which marks the transition from the eighteenth century to the nineteenth, from the old regime to the Napoleonic. The decorative spirit of the court of Louis XVI has died out. The classical severity of David has come in. The moment is one for the antique virtues. Prud'hon has them, in a measure. He has a positively pagan delight in form. He has the academician's feeling for stately composition. But there is a poetic instinct struggling about in him. He would be a classicist, only he happens to have been born a romanticist. So he filters the formulas of David through his temperament, looks at the nude not as at a marble in a museum, but through rose colored spectacles, which leave it with the animation of life heightened and made

### Nude



(From the painting by Gertrude Fiske, at the Autumn Academy.)

handed luminosity. The figure, though only of mild interest, is stronger than that in his other canvas, a study of a nude against a landscape background. The nudes are not, on the whole, exhilarating. Mr. E. C. Taylor's "Allegory of Painting" is handsomely conceived and well drawn in an academic way, but the modeling is nerveless. One respects this, and the studies of Messrs. Enssam, Frieske, Jones, Low and Farlow, without developing any warmth in appreciation of competent but uninspired productions. The nude with the most energy and cleverness shown in its workmanship is the picture by Miss Gertrude Fiske (No. 344), which has well won the Julia A. Shaw memorial prize.

The portraits include some good pieces, such as the "Veteran of the Civil War," by Mr. Giovanni Troccoli, particularly admirable for its draftsmanship, which alone would justify the award to it of the Proctor prize. There are good portraits by Robert Philip, Wayman Adams, John F. Follinsbee, R. S. Bredin and Edmund Greacen. The huge "Dancer" by Maurice Molarsky is too huge for its contents. It fails, too,

with romantic fervor and style is consummately achieved. American students who care for him must have regretted missing the great show of his works held last summer in Paris. But the present group is a good substitute for it. From this handful of paintings and drawings one may learn all that Prud'hon has to tell us. It makes a comparatively minor passage in the history of French art, but one of the most seductive.

### The Chinese

#### A Collection of Paintings and Other Objects

An uncommonly valuable group of Oriental antiquities may be seen at the Reinhardt gallery, brought over from the house of the Kleykamps at The Hague. All the aspects of early Chinese art are represented, painting, sculpture in stone and in bronze, pot-

### Young Woman and Cupids



(From the drawing by Prud'hon, at the Wildenstein gallery.)

tery and jade. The jade, by the way, is of that excessively antique order which was practically unknown here until the late Charles L. Freer began to collect it. It is all beautiful, but we must signalize especially the simple Ming bowl (No. 39) with its red-veined surfaces. An object like this has the fascination of a rare jewel. Rareties, of course, abound in this collection, pieces like the remarkable granary urn (No. 60) or the quaint ox-drawn cart (No. 61). The exhibition is largely of museum pieces, a fact which we feel with particular force when in the presence of the sculpture. There are some magnificent Buddhas shown, beginning with the majestic head (No. 56), which so exhales divine serenity that it turns the little room in which it is placed into a sanctuary.

In the midst of these antique visions there looms up, among other paintings an early portrait of an emperor which might have been executed yesterday, so poignantly modern is its transcription of life. The stalwart body, the martial pose, the powerful head are drawn with the vigorous simplicity of a Manet. But neither Manet in the nineteenth century nor the Andrea del Castagno who is recalled from the Renaissance by this stupendous portrait could have achieved the monumental mass and weight that the Chinese artist secures. It is an heroic thing and as beautiful as it is imposing. Verily the old Oriental tradition has an accent which centuries have not quite matched in the West.

But the West has its own magic. Upstairs at the Reinhardt gallery there is one of the most fascinating examples of Venetian bravura ever brought to this country, a canvas of Tiepolo's representing him in the very plenitude of his mastery. It is a subject drawn from the antique, "Alexander with the Wife of Darius," but Tiepolo in his wonted operative way dresses up his subject as for a pageant on the lagoons. He lets himself go as regards color, dipping his brush generously in flaming red and honey yellow. His technique matches his palette. It is brilliance itself. Never did he paint with more virtuosity than in this picture. It is pure Tiepolo, hollow as a drum and altogether adorable.

somehow more gracious. He adds to the classical tradition something akin to "the Correggiosity of Correggio," that melting tenderness which, when it escapes sentimentality, is one of the most entrancing things in the world.

It invests with a new grace the linear purity and dignity of his portraits. It softens, makes exquisitely sensuous, the forms in his wonderful "Little grisaille," "Venus," "Hymen et l'Amour." It flings a kind of bloom upon his bewitching drawing, the "Young Woman and Cupids." Prud'hon's portraits are fine things but it is in his drawings that we come nearest to his central enchantment. It is the elegance of the earlier eighteenth century come back, poetized, endued with more of the fresh loveliness of spring, more of the glamour of romance. He knew nothing of that rich breadth which Watteau took over from Rubens. Where he was allied to the painter of "The Departure for the Island of Love" was in his passion for the beauty that is fleeting, diaphanous, fairy-like. The drawing we have just cited is one of his masterpieces, one in which his fusion of classical motive

## Random Impressions In Current Exhibitions

The American Water Color Society and the New York Water Color Club will succeed the Academy at the Fine Arts Building. The next annual exhibition of these organizations is scheduled to open there on December 22.

The members of the Salmagundi Club are busy over the preparations for their regular winter display of "thumb-box sketches." There will be on the 24th the usual stag party and after that the public will be admitted until December 21.

In the gallery of the French Institute there may be seen until next Saturday a collection of posters by the

sixth annual exhibition of intimate paintings at the Macbeth gallery will open to the public next Tuesday. With it will be associated a collection of paintings by George Wharton Edwards.

The Kennedy gallery announces an exhibition of etchings, dry-points and drawings by the English artist Edmund Blampied. At the Ainslie gallery there are water colors by Dec Beebe. The Daniel gallery has just opened the first of its shows for the season.

It is told of a famous French painter that he was once visited by a widow who brought her whole family with her to persuade him into painting a portrait of her late husband. They had no photographs, no drawings, only their recollections, and though the artist stood aghast he was finally prevailed upon to undertake the commission. The family came to look the portrait over when it was finished, and at last, following a stupefied silence, the eldest daughter spoke up. "Yes," she said, "it is indeed our dear father—but how changed!" The story comes back to us on visiting the Ehrlich gallery. It has long been identified with the old masters, but now it has literally tucked up its draperies and waded in, covering the bare walls with a fine mess of French and English modernists. It seems a pity.

The Frenchmen are more or less familiar, though Matisse is not often seen in so plausible a study as his painting of roses. The English types are newer, including some which we do not recall seeing in the series of shows at the Sculptors' gallery. One of them, Mr. Duncan Grant, hints obscurely that he might conceivably have something interesting to say in landscape. Mr. Roger Fry, Mrs. Clive Bell and the rest merely repeat the familiar modernist effect. It is that of persons who have the desire to paint, but in the process of dabbling with the art have got entangled in some half-way house of

theory, and in consequence have failed to master their instruments. Their work is feebly amateurish, with a leaning toward ugliness. It is very wearisome to the beholder. The trouble with modernism is that it would justify itself not through what it does but through what its makers say about it. This exhibition contains not a trace of beauty. It is, frankly, a bore.

On Wednesday, November 29, the Brooklyn Museum will open a special exhibition of English and French painters. Oils, water colors, pastels and

drawings will be included. Besnard and Orpen will be represented, Simon and Rothenstein, Deggs and Shannon, Guillaumin and Muirhead Bone. A few Americans will be included—Miss Cassatt, Whistler and Sargent. Various private collections have been drawn upon for the show.

Yesterday afternoon a new Oriental exhibition was opened at the Bourgeois gallery. Materials for it have been slowly assembling for some time. They embrace particularly a number of Chinese paintings.

## Ancient and Modern Paintings

### EARLY ENGLISH PORTRAITS

BARBIZON AND SELECTED AMERICAN PAINTINGS

BRONZES BY PAUL MANSHIP

AT THE GALLERIES OF

SCOTT & FOWLES

667 Fifth Avenue

Between 52nd and 53rd Sts.

## NATIONAL ACADEMY of DESIGN

WINTER EXHIBITION

NOW OPEN

215 West 57th Street

DAILY 10 A. M. TO 6 P. M., SUNDAY 1:30 TO 6 P. M.

Admission 50c. including CATALOGUE

## Parish-Watson & Co. Inc.

560 FIFTH AVENUE,

New York

Rare Old Chinese  
Porcelain, Pottery and  
Sculptures

Archaic Chinese Bronzes

Fine Jade Carvings

The most important collection of Early Persian  
Faience to be found in the  
markets of the world.

## M. KNOEDLER & CO.

Invite You to View an

EXHIBITION OF

PAINTINGS  
WATER COLORS  
ETCHINGS

By

William Walcot

At the Galleries

556 FIFTH AVENUE  
Near 46th St.

Commencing Nov. 13th

## Whitney Studio Club

147 West Fourth Street

Exhibition of

SCULPTURE & DRAWINGS

by

Grace Mott Johnson

DRAWINGS BY

Lila Wheelock

November 18th—December 24

Open week days 11 a. m. to 10 p. m.

Sundays: 3 to 9 p. m.

## FIRST EXHIBITION

IN AMERICA

of the

PAINTINGS

of

John Noble

to

November 25

at the Galleries of

Frank K. M. Rehn

6 West Fiftieth Street

## Annual Exhibition

of

AMERICAN and

EUROPEAN PAINTINGS

HOWARD YOUNG

GALLERIES

620 FIFTH AVENUE

## DUDENSING Galleries

Paintings of

MOLLENHAUER

Expressionist

"The Ultimate Achievement of Modernism."

45 West 44th St.

During November

## J. YOUNG-HUNTER

Recent Portraits

and Sketches

Montague Flagg Galleries

42 East 57th Street

November 13-30

## ELINOR M. BARNARD

WATER COLORS

BROWN ROBERTSON GALLERIES

415 Madison Ave.

EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS

ADIRONDACK MOUNTAINS

AND PERSIA BY

HAROLD F. WESTON

To November 23

MONTROSS GALLERY

350 Fifth Ave. at 48th St.

## BIDDLE EXHIBITION WILDENSTEIN GALLERY

Opening Monday, Nov. 20

## PRUD'HON EXHIBITION WILDENSTEIN GALLERY NOW CURRENT

## Exhibition of PAINTINGS By D'ESPAGNAT and MORET

Extended to Nov. 29

Durand-Ruel

12 East 57th St.

## EXHIBITION OF EARLY CHINESE Paintings AND Sculptures

NOVEMBER 18TH

TO

DECEMBER 9TH

Bourgeois Galleries, Inc.

66 Fifth Ave.

## ANNUAL EXHIBITION OF PICTURES AND SCULPTURE OF THE MEMBERS OF the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation

Nov. 22 to Dec. 12, inclusive

ART CENTER, 65 and 67

East 56th St.

10 a. m. to 6 p. m., except Sundays

## Saito

Chinese Antiques

48 East 57th Street

New York

## Elmore Studios

5 West 28th St., N.Y.C.

Antiques and Reproductions.

Just arrived, large consignment of wrought iron and bronzes.

Marble, Lead, Stone, etc.

Garden furniture, reasonable prices. Estimates given

## Exhibition of Hand Wrought Silver

by

GEORG JENSEN

of Copenhagen

Member of the Paris Salon

ART CENTER, East 56th St.

10 A. M. to 6 P. M., except Sundays

## Exhibition of

Hand Wrought Silver

by

GEORG JENSEN

of Copenhagen

Member of the Paris Salon

ART CENTER, East 56th St.

10 A. M. to 6 P. M., except Sundays

Exhibition of

WATER COLOR PAINTINGS

Holland Switzerland America

and FLOWERS by

DEE BEEBE

AINSLIE GALLERIES

877 Fifth Ave., at 53rd Street

November 16 to December 1.